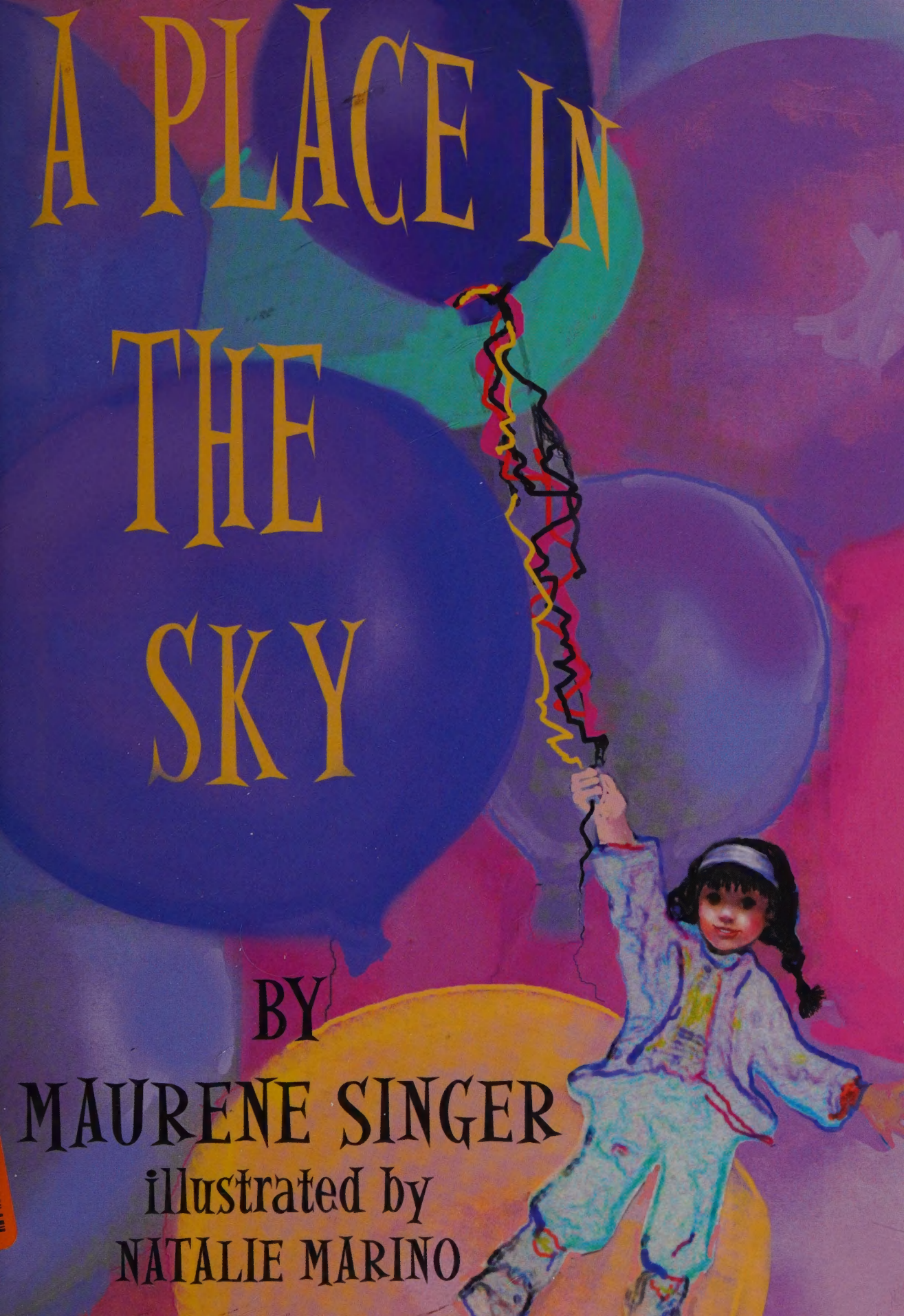
A PLACE IN THE SKY



BY
MAURENE SINGER
illustrated by
NATALIE MARINO

ABOUT THE BOOK

"A Place In The Sky" is a picture storybook about a little girl who loses her balloon. Her mom comforts her with a story about a magical place where lost balloons go. Sarah falls asleep dreaming about the balloon, and the fantasyland beyond the clouds, moon and stars.

Sarah discovers a world outside her own with the help of a magical balloon, who guides her on a wonderful adventure and safely home again. Set in present day, "A Place In The Sky" uses fantasy and flight of imagination to portray the poignancy of losing something you love, and coming to terms with the loss.

Maurene Singer conceived this story with artistic design that places it in a category reserved for literature.

Natalie Marino's illustrations are museum quality paintings, illuminating the depth and meaning of the words.

"A Place In The Sky" is a beautiful fantasy, combining poetic language and sensitive images for children of all ages.

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FOR MY SON AND DAUGHTER,
AND TO THE MEMORY OF MY
BABY WHO WILL ALWAYS LIVE
IN MY HEART.
M. SINGER

FOR MY BABIES: STEPHANIE,
JONATHAN, RONNIE &
STEFANA.
N. MARINO

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AROUSEL PUBLICATIONS

My mother told me a story
and her mother told her...

and so it goes...about a place in the sky where balloons go.

I had a bright purple balloon. One Sunday afternoon I took my balloon outside.

I waved to my mother and father through the window.

and tied my balloon to the fence.

I love the smell of cold air and the taste of fresh snow on my tongue. I forgot all about my balloon!

The string must have untied because the balloon was floating in the air, drifting through the snowflakes. I watched as he disappeared into the winter sky. I covered my mouth with my mitten, and felt tears roll down my cheeks. The salt stung my face.

My mother knelt down and wiped my eyes with her handkerchief.
"I lost my balloon, mommy. I'll never have another balloon like him," I cried.
"It's a very good thing you did, Sarah," She whispered.
"It is?" I asked.

"Yes," she said. "You set your balloon free to go to a wonderful place far, far away; a magical land beyond the sky, the place where balloons go."

She carried me into the house. I was so tired. I rested my head on her shoulder.

"You'll feel better after a nap," she said as she took my boots off and covered me with a soft quilt. I didn't mind sleeping, even though I was too old for a nap. My mother sat beside me.

"Where do balloons go?" I asked while yawning.

"They go to a magical land beyond the sky. Every balloon that flies up into the clouds is on a journey. Go to sleep now, and I'll tell you

more about it when you wake up."
She kissed my forehead and
tiptoed out of the room.

I closed my eyes...and then...I could see my balloon against a bright-blue summer sky. "That's funny," I said to myself. "It was winter and snowing when I went to sleep." I thought very hard but couldn't figure it out. My balloon bounced through my window.

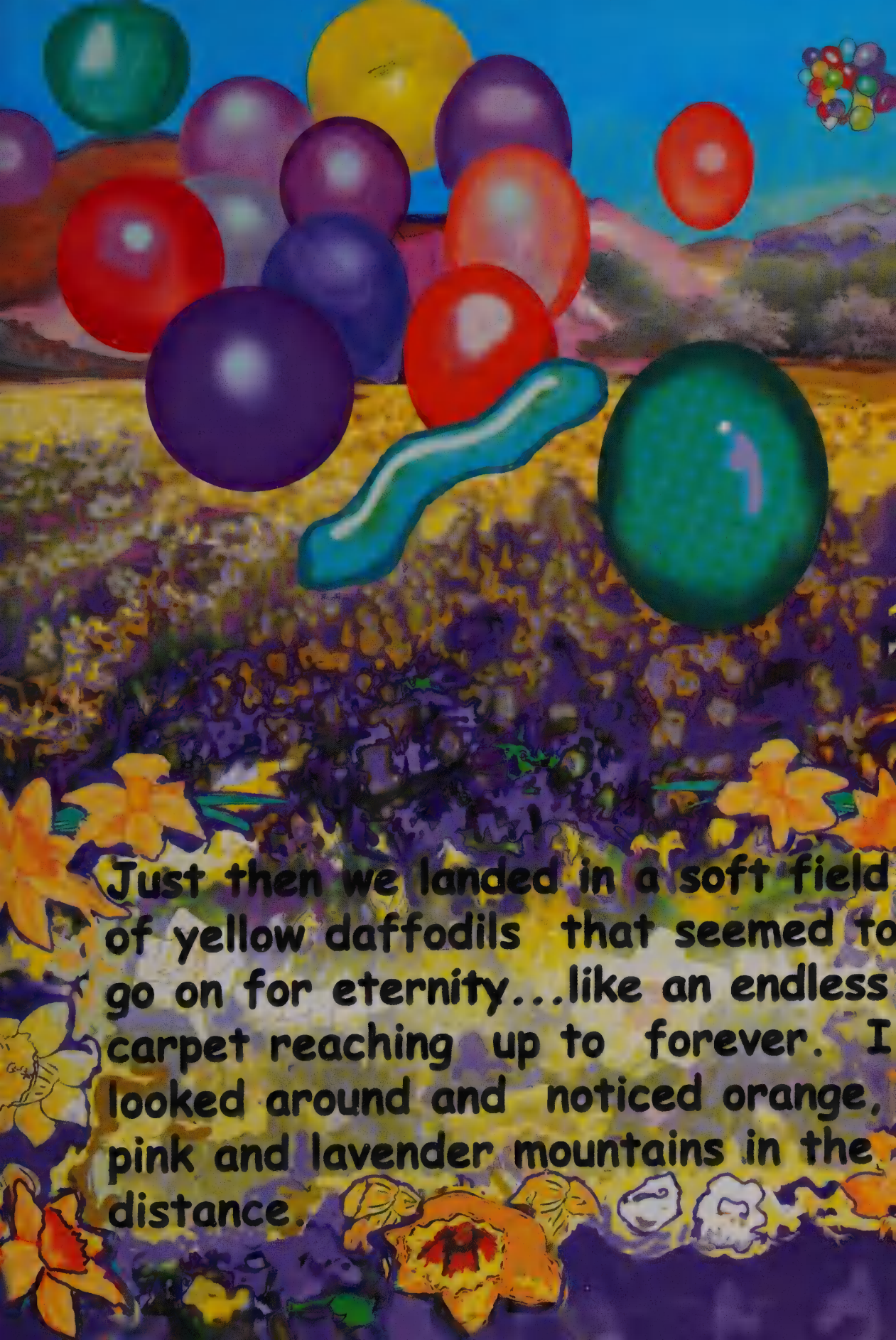
He smiled at me with a twinkle in his eyes. "Where are you going?" I asked. "To a secret place beyond the sky. Do you want to come with me?" he asked. "Yes," I heard myself answer from somewhere else.

I reached my hand up, and my balloon wrapped his hand around mine. He smelled like orange-vanilla ice cream.

All of a sudden, I was lifted out of my bed, holding onto the string of my balloon.

We were traveling very fast, flying through the wind and clouds. We passed several stars and I thought I saw

the moon peeking at us as we whizzed by.
"We're almost there, Sarah. Hold on tight," he said.



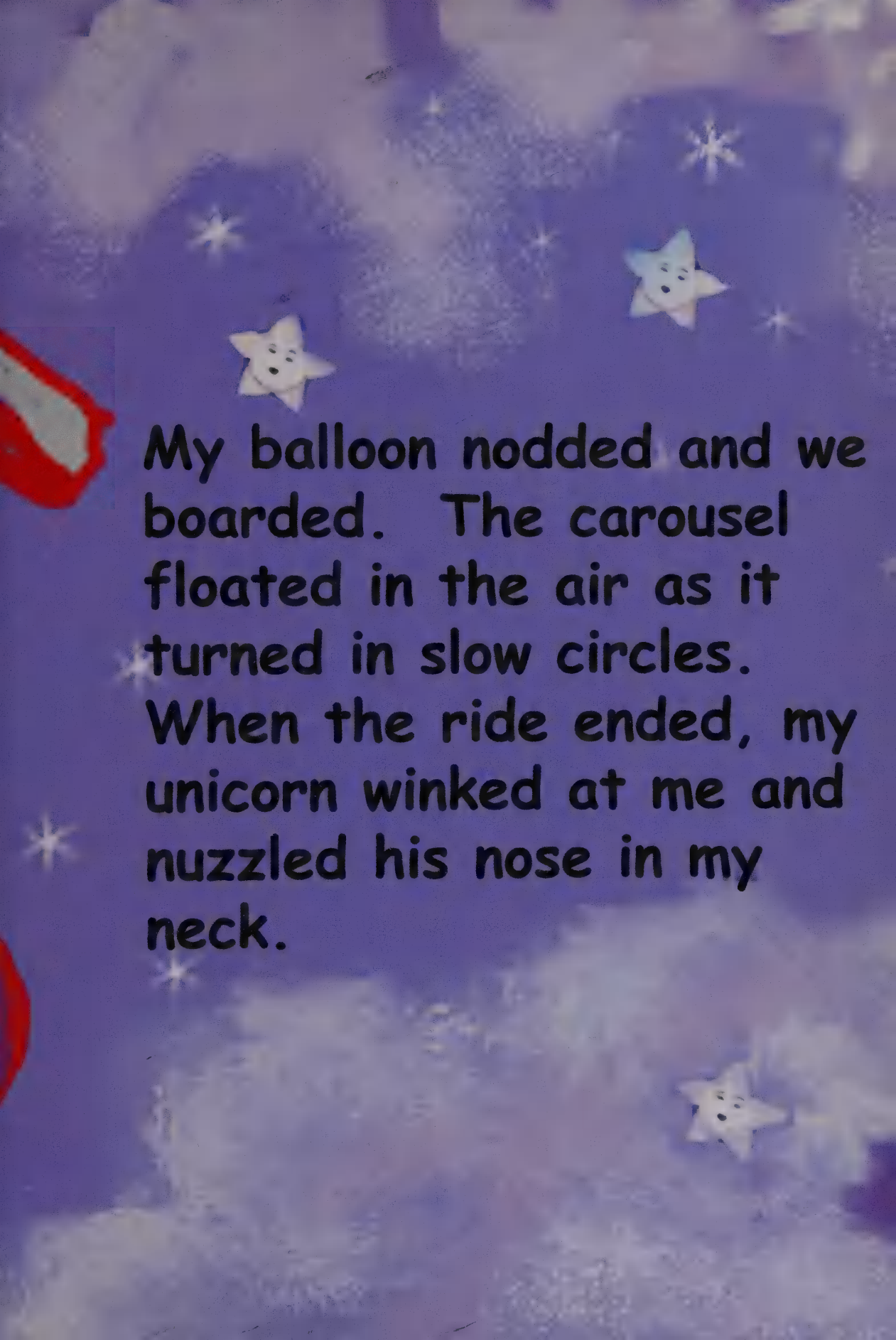
Just then we landed in a soft field of yellow daffodils that seemed to go on for eternity...like an endless carpet reaching up to forever. I looked around and noticed orange, pink and lavender mountains in the distance.

We were far away...to a place in the sky where balloons go. Some of the the other children looked as if they were from different places in time. They were dressed in clothes from days long past.

The sky was filled with balloons; a spectrum of colors, shapes and sizes. All the balloons smelled like orange-vanilla ice cream.

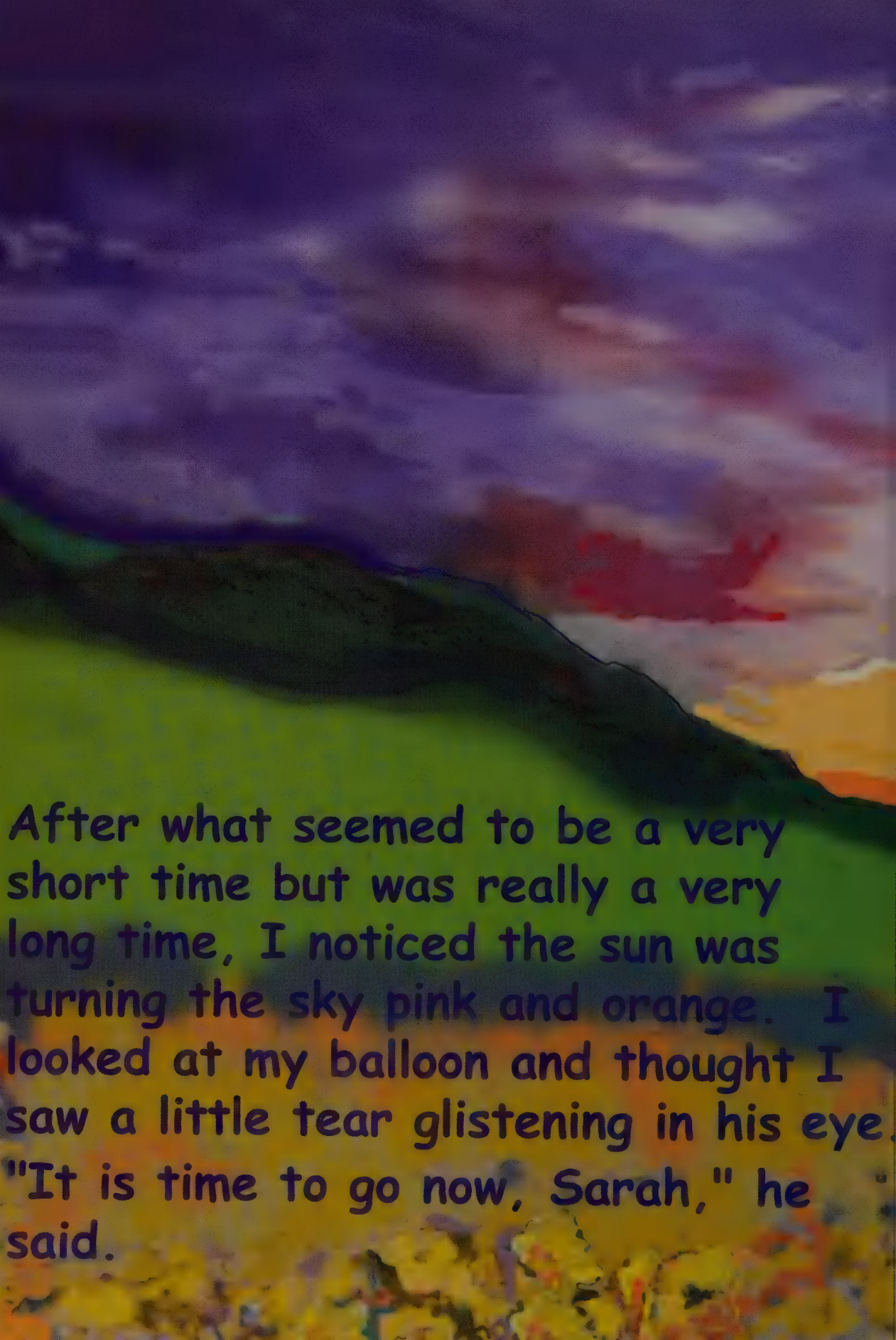
I heard music playing in the distance. My balloon took my hand and we glided over the fields of daffodils, to a carousel sitting alone on a hilltop.

The carousel was a rainbow of colorful unicorns.
"Oh, can I ride on it?" I asked.


My balloon nodded and we boarded. The carousel floated in the air as it turned in slow circles. When the ride ended, my unicorn winked at me and nuzzled his nose in my neck.

Later my balloon and
I strolled down a
street made of black
licorice.

The houses had chocolate shutters, sugar windows, gumdrop doorknobs and a marshmallow picket fence.



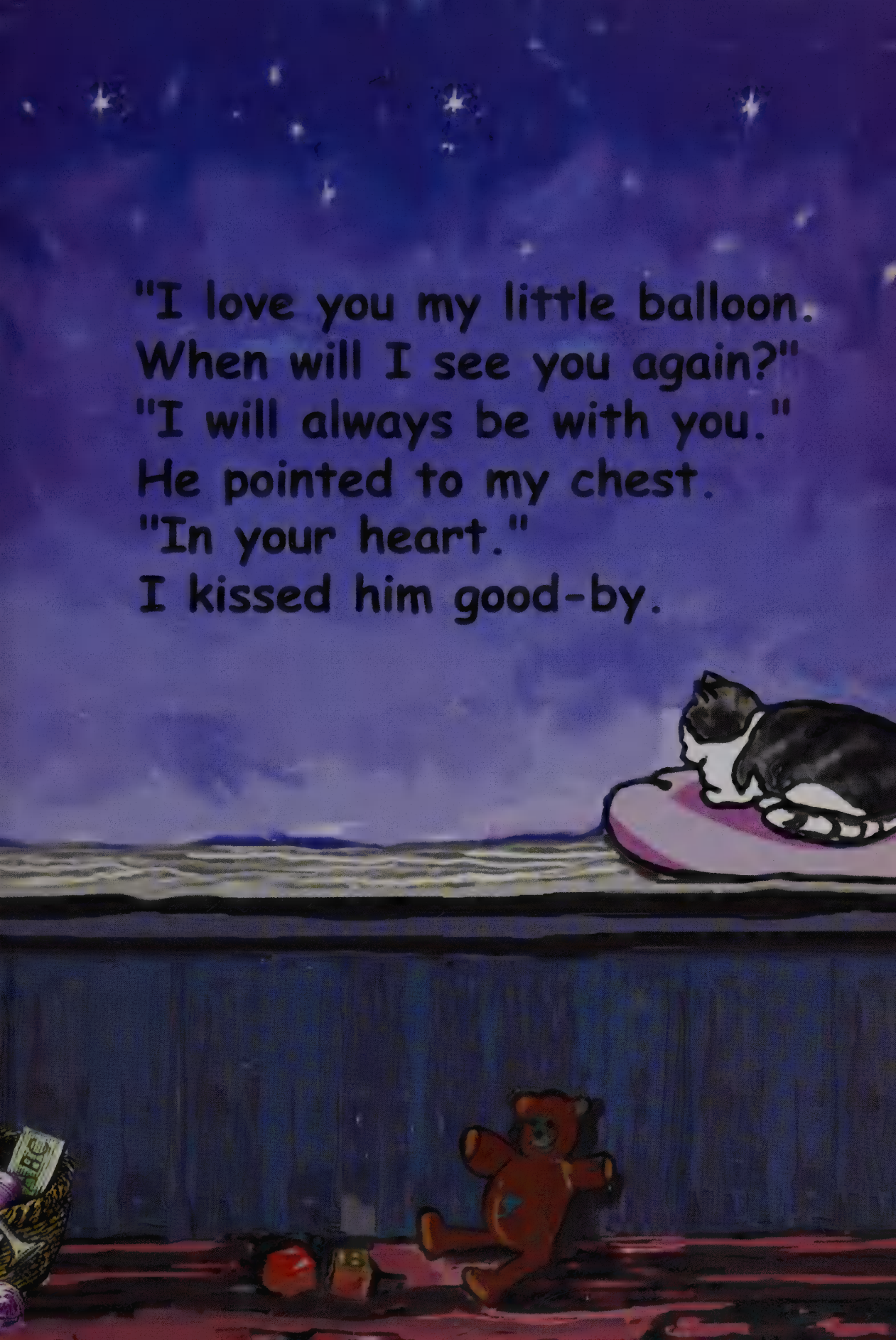
After what seemed to be a very short time but was really a very long time, I noticed the sun was turning the sky pink and orange. I looked at my balloon and thought I saw a little tear glistening in his eye. "It is time to go now, Sarah," he said.

My balloon took my hand, and we sailed into the sky, back over the orange, pink and lavender mountains, and back over the carpet of daffodils. We glided through the clouds and landed gently into my bedroom.

"Thank you for sharing my special place with me," he said. It was sad to see him go, but I knew it was for the best.

After all, I would always have my memories.

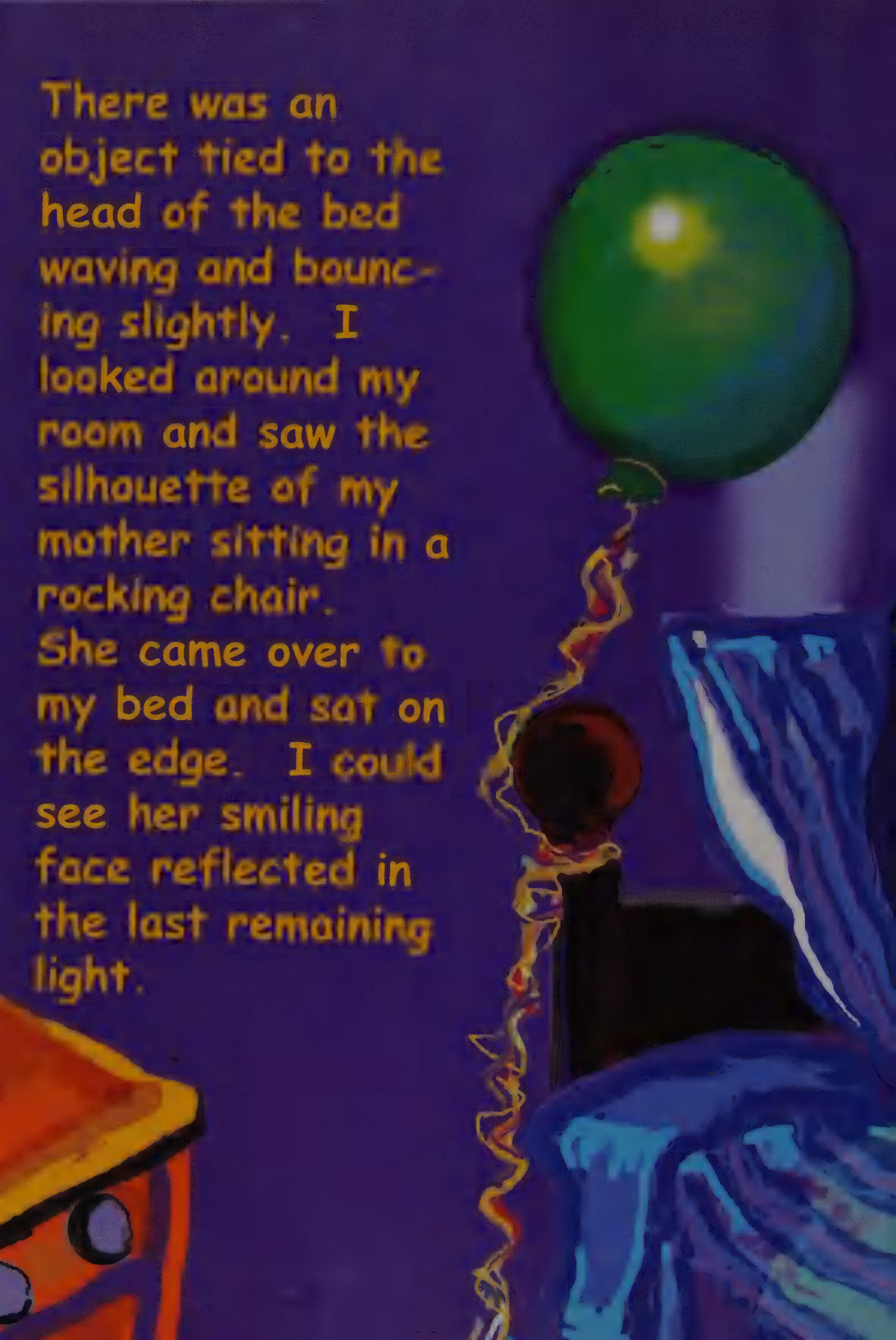
"I love you my little balloon.
When will I see you again?"
"I will always be with you."
He pointed to my chest.
"In your heart."
I kissed him good-by.



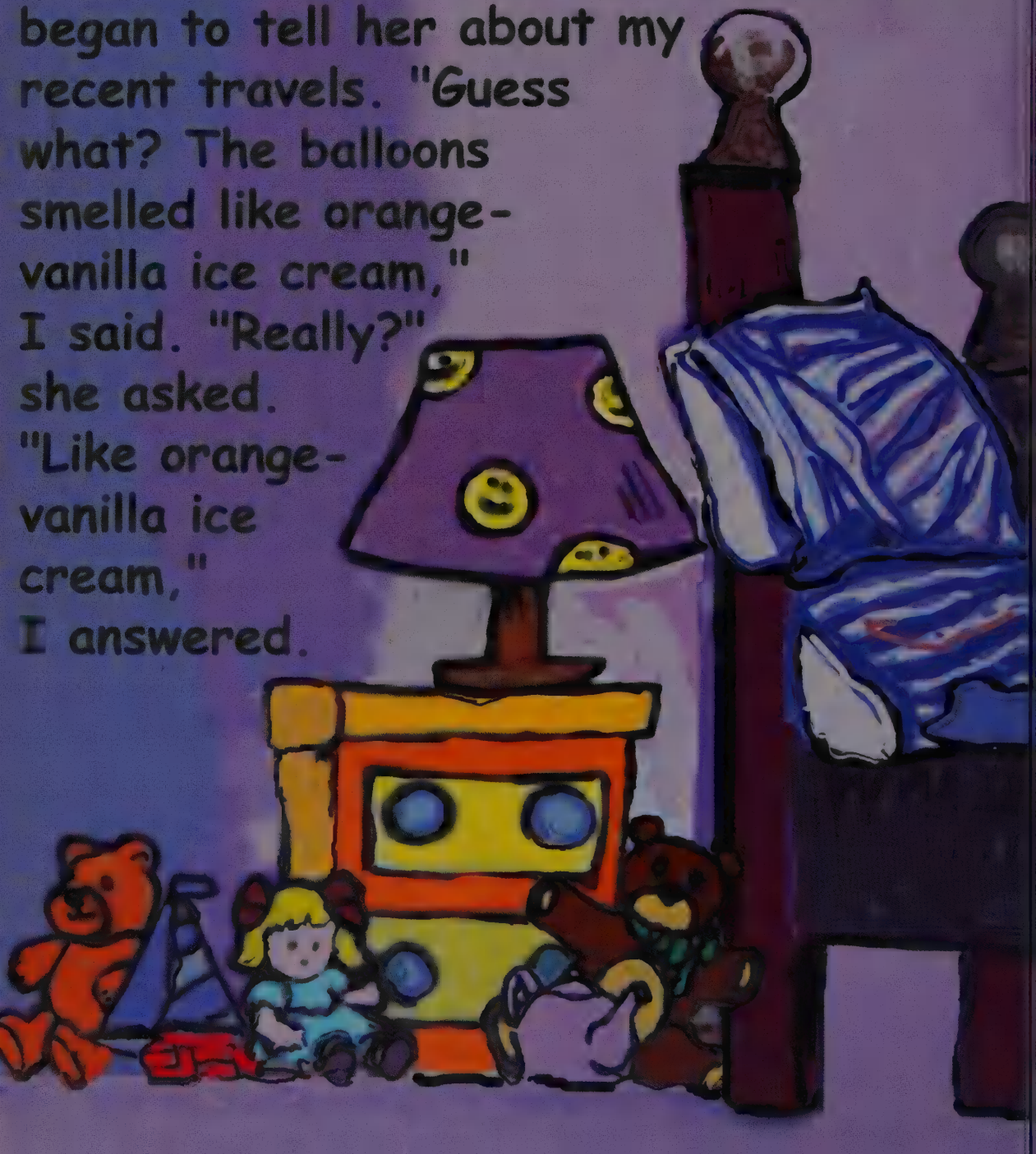
When I opened my eyes, my room was almost dark. Twilight was seeping through the crack under the door and around the space where my curtain didn't close.

I kept very still, listening. But I only heard the quiet sound of new snow falling.

There was an object tied to the head of the bed waving and bouncing slightly. I looked around my room and saw the silhouette of my mother sitting in a rocking chair. She came over to my bed and sat on the edge. I could see her smiling face reflected in the last remaining light.



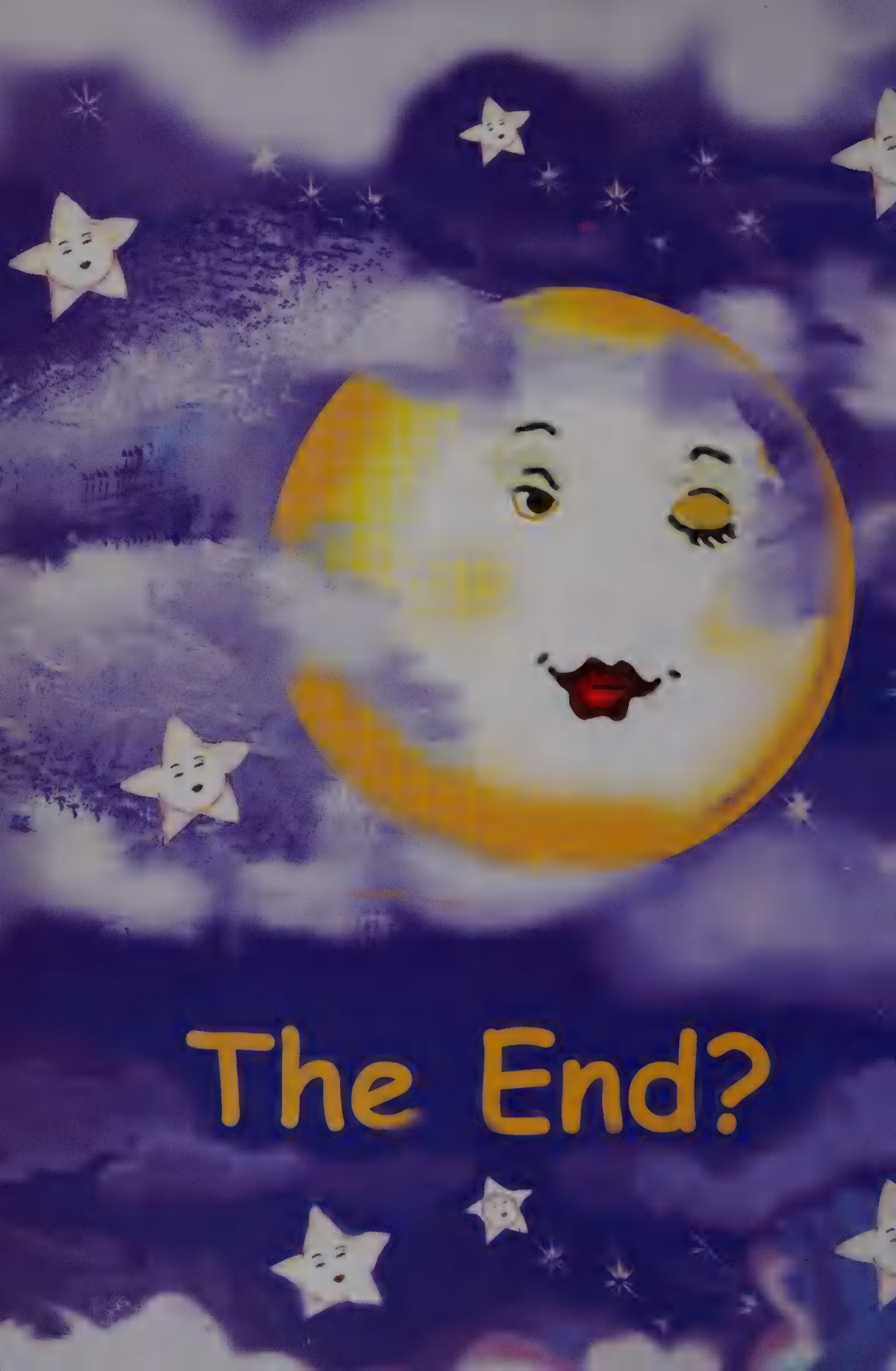
"While you were asleep, I brought you a green balloon. And, I have a special treat, orange-vanilla ice cream for dessert," she said. "Orange-vanilla ice cream?" I asked. She nodded, and I began to tell her about my recent travels. "Guess what? The balloons smelled like orange-vanilla ice cream," I said. "Really?" she asked. "Like orange-vanilla ice cream," I answered.



She smiled, and I knew that long ago, when my mother was a little girl, a special balloon took her to that magical land.

"I want to share it with my children some day. Do you think it will still be there, mommy?" It seemed like a long time. Finally she answered.

"As long as children love balloons ...there will always be a place in the sky where balloons go."


The End?

Maurene Singer graduated from the Film Department of New York University. She continued with her education, receiving a Master's Degree in screenplay writing. She has been writing feature length and short screenplays in a variety of genres for a number of years. She also writes short stories for children and young adults. "A Place In The Sky" is Maurene's debut children's picture storybook.
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